

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott issued the following statement on the White House announcement that President Obama will sign a proclamation on Tuesday, November 1, 2011 designating Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia a national monument:

"This announcement is wonderful news for Fort Monroe, the City of Hampton, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and our nation. This is a culmination of the hard work of the citizens of Hampton Roads, conservation groups, the Hampton City Council, Governor Bob McDonnell, the Virginia Congressional Delegation, and most of all Hampton's Mayor Molly Ward.

"The history of Fort Monroe is older than that of the United States and the story of this fort is the story of our nation. The first English settlers to arrive in the Americas established a fortification at Old Point Comfort in 1609, the forerunner to the current day Fort Monroe. In 1619, the first Africans arrived at Old Point Comfort, marking the beginning of slavery in America.

"During the Civil War, nearly 250 years after the birth of slavery, Fort Monroe was witness to the end of slavery. Three enslaved African-Americans escaped and made their way to the Union Army-controlled Fort Monroe seeking their freedom. Gen. Benjamin Butler issued an order at Fort Monroe classifying all slaves who reached Union lines as contraband of war, and as such, free men. It was with this action that slavery was first abolished. Fort Monroe, built on the land where slavery first arrived in America, was now known as 'Freedom's Fortress.'

"After the Civil War, Fort Monroe remained a critical military asset supporting and training the United States Army until its closure in September of this year. As our nation remembers the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War and prepares to commemorate Veterans Day, this action by the President will ensure that the role of Fort Monroe is preserved in the story of America for future generations. I look forward to joining the President on Tuesday for this momentous occasion."

# # #